



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Salmon-Challis
National Forest
Salmon/Cobalt Ranger District

311 McPherson St.
Salmon, ID 83467
208 756-5200

File Code: 1950/2820
Date: March 12, 2012

Scoping Notice: Panther (Big Creek) Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing Project

Dear Interested Party,

The Salmon-Challis National Forest received a request for concurrence from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on three contiguous, non-competitive geothermal lease applications. The Forest must provide the BLM with a decision on the availability of the applied-for lands for geothermal leasing and recommendations for stipulations to protect other resource values. A preliminary review indicates that the applied-for lands are currently available for leasing. Therefore, the Forest is conducting an environmental review, as required in order to respond to BLM's request for concurrence and recommendations for stipulations.

The project area is located in Lemhi County on the Salmon-Cobalt and North Fork Ranger Districts in sections 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, and 28, T. 23 N. , R. 18 E., Boise Meridian, Idaho (see enclosed map). The lease-application area encompasses approximately nine square miles and is approximately centered on a surficial geothermal feature commonly known as Panther Creek Hot Springs.

The Forest Service role in geothermal leasing is primarily defined in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which requires interagency coordination of geothermal leasing and permitting on public lands. The Forest must ensure that any consent to lease is consistent with the Salmon National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1988, as amended, by recommending lease stipulations to the BLM, if necessary to meet standards contained therein. The Forest must also consider a Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario to develop reasonable stipulations and determine project impacts. The RFD scenario is inherently speculative, but the BLM has defined RFD scenarios in the form of generalized ranges of disturbance areas for the exploration, drilling, and utilization phases of geothermal development (*Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States, October 2008*). The Forest anticipates preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA), tiered to the BLM's Programmatic EIS, to document the effects of the project.

Your scoping comments are being requested to help identify potential issues related to the proposed action. Please be as specific as possible in expressing your comments so they can be effectively addressed. Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection.

You are invited to a public meeting on March 27, 2012 at 6:00 PM to learn about the Panther (Big Creek) Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing project in the main conference room of the Salmon-Challis National Forest Supervisor's Office, located at 1206 South Challis Street, Salmon, Idaho, 83467. Your comments on the project will be gladly accepted at the meeting.



Comments may be also sent to Salmon-Cobalt Ranger District, Attn: District Ranger, 311 McPherson Street South, Salmon, Idaho, 83467, or electronically to comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-salmon-cobalt@fs.fed.us, with the project name, **Panther (Big Creek) Hot Springs Geothermal Leasing Project**, in the subject line. Although your comments are always welcome, comments will be most helpful to us if received by April 27, 2012.

For more information about this project, please contact Piper Goessel, Team Leader, HC 63 Box 1669, Challis, Idaho, 83226, (208) 879-4158 or kgoessel@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jay T. Winfield
JAY WINFIELD
Acting District Ranger

ENCLOSURE